

## Part V : Implementation



## Part 5 Implementation

For the past several decades, the property owners, businesses, faith-based institutions, residents and other stakeholders of the Sweet Auburn community and the City have struggled to return Auburn Avenue to its proper and historic role as one of Atlanta's premier economic, cultural and residential centers. The Butler-Auburn Redevelopment Plan Update attempts to build on this good work, update potential projects and create an aggressive focus on public/private development projects necessary to implement the community's vision. Following national trends and shifting demographics and under the proactive leadership of Mayor Shirley Franklin and the Atlanta City Council, the City of Atlanta is experiencing a rebirth in its attractiveness for new development. In particular, Downtown Atlanta, including Sweet Auburn, is uniquely positioned to take advantage of current market dynamics encouraging mixed use, walkability and cultural authenticity.

Sweet Auburn is the critical piece in the overall revitalization of Downtown, but the implementation of the projects detailed on the previous pages will take concerted efforts by many public sector and private sector partners. The plan, which includes \_\_\_\_ (insert number of total units, etc.), totaling over \$1 billion in investment, will necessarily unfold over several years. The implementation tables and narratives in this section attempt to summarize the guiding implementation principles, the organizational structure necessary to accomplish the plan, a conceptual funding approach and project phasing. In addition, several policies and procedures are recommended for utilizing the powerful redevelopment tools that this plan enables.

Figure 5.0:  
Decatur Street



(Image: GSU Archives, Lane Brother / Tracy O'Neil Collections)



## 5.1 Implementation Overview

### 5.1.1 Authority and Scope of Redevelopment Powers

This Butler / Auburn Community Redevelopment Plan (CRP) Update is a comprehensive technical document defining the official public policy guidelines of the City of Atlanta for conduct of public and private redevelopment actions in the Sweet Auburn area in compliance with the Redevelopment Powers Law (O.C.G.A. Section 36-44) of the State of Georgia. This plan fulfills the requirement of providing a "written plan of redevelopment." Furthermore, the existing condition analyses contained in Part 3 provides full documentation as to the area's qualification for designation as a redevelopment area (i.e, specific findings of slum and blight).

Upon its adoption by resolution of the City Council and approval by the Mayor of Atlanta, this plan will serve as confirmation that the Sweet Auburn area is appropriate for urban redevelopment initiatives because of blight, distress and impaired development. Further, this plan, as required by law, establishes that the "rehabilitation, conservation, or redevelopment, or a combination thereof, of such area or areas is necessary in the interest of public health, safety, morals, or welfare of the residents of the municipality or county."

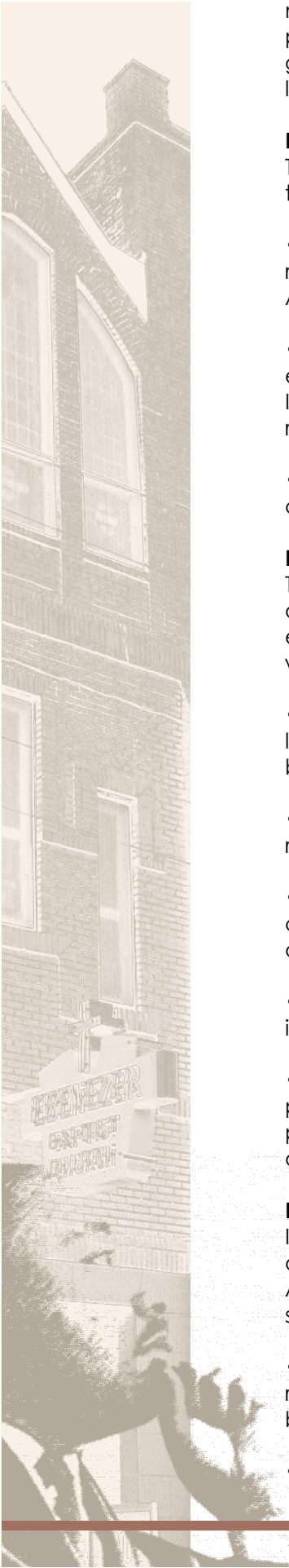
This plan thus becomes the basis on which the City of Atlanta may exercise its urban redevelopment powers in accordance with the Redevelopment Powers Law and other related legislation and administrative regulations of the State of Georgia.

### 5.1.2 Guiding Principles of Implementation

In order to fully realize Butler / Auburn's stated vision of a community that is reclaimed, preserved, revitalized, and redeveloped, several underlying principles of revitalization

Figure 5.1:  
Sweet Auburn  
Study Area





must be followed during all phases of revitalization. The following implementation principles are shaped by a philosophy that protects and respects the community's goals, encourages sensitive use of redevelopment powers, and maintains a business-like approach to public and private partnerships.

### **Principle #1: Preservation-Oriented Approach**

The overall physical emphasis of the CRP Update is placed on preserving and enhancing the unique character of the area. This will be accomplished in several ways:

- Wherever possible and practical, existing buildings should be preserved and rehabilitated. This will be particularly important for older, commercial buildings along Auburn and Edgewood.
- New development should explore every avenue possible to preserve and incorporate existing historic structures (within the Landmark District) within the development. Incorporation should be done in a manner so as to highlight the preserved structures, rather than absorb them.
- New construction and rehabilitation projects should be designed in a way that is compatible with the low density historic character of the area.

### **Principle #2: Community-Based Implementation**

To ensure that the revitalization of the area is in keeping with the goals and objectives of the community, its residents, businesses and community organizations must be empowered to guide the redevelopment process. This can be achieved in several ways:


- A process for community-based review of projects should be established involving local organizations and Neighborhood Planning Unit – M (NPU-M). (See Section 5.2 below).
- The community must be in agreement as to the aggressive use of municipal redevelopment powers to avoid governmental abuse of this tool.
- There must be a process for selectively amending the CRP Update over time to continually reflect the changing desires of the community and/or market conditions affecting redevelopment.
- Local Community Development Corporations (CDCs) should play a significant role in most redevelopment efforts.
- Existing property owners should be given opportunities to participate in redevelopment projects that conform to plan objectives. This can be accomplished through equity partnerships with new developers or through assistance from various implementing agencies.

### **Principle #3: Targeted and Phased Approach**

In order to maximize the impact of revitalization efforts, actions taken by community organizations, implementation agencies (e.g, City of Atlanta, Atlanta Development Authority, etc,) and the private sector must support one another and be targeted to specific areas. This will best be achieved by adhering to the following strategies:

- All parties should target their efforts in strategic locations to achieve a "critical-mass" of results. Key projects should be identified which will quickly attack perceived and actual blighting conditions, thereby setting the stage for attracting new private investment.
- Implementation agencies, community-based organizations and private redevelopers





should work collaboratively, rather than at cross-purposes. Where possible, available resources should be combined in projects and creative partnerships should be encouraged to maximize the leveraging of public resources.

- Redevelopment of the Butler / Auburn Area as a whole should be carefully phased over a period of 15-20 years. Over the long haul, this will minimize the fiscal exposure of non-profit organizations and public sector subsidies (i.e., a private market approach to the extent feasible, particularly in later phases).

#### **Principle #4: Leveraged Approach**

It should be recognized that although the private sector will bear most of the financial burden of revitalizing the Sweet Auburn community, public sector resources will be a critical component in the overall funding strategy. In order to maximize the impact of public resources which will likely be hard to come by, public funds should seek to maximize their leveraging of private resources through the following strategies:

- With the exception of capital improvement projects, public sector resources should rarely be used in isolation. Rather, to the greatest extent feasible, public sector funds should be a component within larger privately funded initiatives in a public-private "cost-sharing" philosophy.
- The use of public funds should be limited to situations that result in a "sustainable" model of redevelopment. Public funds should not be used in circumstances where the received public subsidy is merely a stop-gap, or temporary economic measure with the long-term result being that of continued economic decline.
- Public resources should not be utilized for redevelopment projects as a "bonus" when other private sector means or forces are available. Public sector funds should largely be considered within an "only if absolutely necessary" framework or as an inducement to the private market that would otherwise not materialize.
- To the extent feasible, public funds should be recovered and recycled through the use of revolving funds thus creating a maximum impact with limited initial public investments.
- Charitable sources and private fundraising mechanisms should be aggressively employed for non-revenue generating projects in order to minimize the burden placed on public sector subsidies.



## 5.2 Implementation Partnership Structure

It goes without saying that the implementation of this CRP Update will require the active participation and dogged determination of a wide variety of partners. These include service providers, governmental agencies, local Community Development Corporations, existing advocacy groups/associations, Neighborhood Planning Unit - M, area institutions, local property and business owners, as well as area residents. However, it is recognized that a new, targeted organization needs to take the reigns and forge new opportunities that heretofore have not existed in Sweet Auburn.

### 5.2.1 Primary Implementation Entity

While many organizations have played roles in trying to advance previous revitalization efforts, the key to the success of the Butler-Auburn Redevelopment Plan Update is the creation of a community-based redevelopment agency, herein referred to as the **Sweet Auburn Redevelopment Agency**. This agency would be responsible for ongoing project definition and implementation, in collaboration with the private sector and other partners, for public information and marketing and for general advocacy for the area. If necessary, the Redevelopment Agency can summon the power of eminent domain through an appeal for action to the Atlanta Development Authority and/or City of Atlanta; although condemnation should be used as a last resort after all avenues of negotiation are exhausted.

The final details of the new organization will require more exploration and analysis, but the Redevelopment Plan Update recommends the following conceptual structure for formation and governance. The Atlanta Development Authority would designate a portion of its redevelopment powers in this defined geographic area to the stakeholder-led entity. (GA36-44-4) The Sweet Auburn Redevelopment Agency will be governed by a board of directors representing the City of Atlanta (including the Bureau of Planning and the Atlanta Urban Design Commission), the Atlanta Development Authority, the U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, Central Atlanta Progress, and commercial property owners within the district such as Wheat Street Charitable Foundation, Big Bethel AME, Butler Street YMCA, Historic District Development Corporation, SABIA, Georgia State University, Grady Hospital, and the Atlanta Life Insurance Company. Board members' appointment guidelines will be based on a similar structure as 501c3 non-profit corporations created for this purpose. The Authority's board would be responsible for interviewing and appointing an Executive Director, who in turn may hire supporting administrative/development staff.

In its initial years, the Sweet Auburn Redevelopment Agency could focus on the following priorities:

#### Administration:

- Provide redevelopment plan implementation and oversight services
- Serve as a clearing house for coordinating issues related to ongoing projects in the area
- Work in concert with Central Atlanta Progress to develop and issue RFPs for consultants and other services associated with projects such as infrastructure, landscaping, signage, parks construction etc.
- Support and encourage investment, development and job creation in the Auburn / Edgewood Corridors



### **Communications:**

- Facilitate and maintain communications with City of Atlanta, Central Atlanta Progress, the National Park Service, SABIA, Historic District Development Corporation, Georgia State University, landowners, developers, residents, merchants and other stakeholder groups in the area
- Develop ongoing newsletter and website for the area, and coordinate marketing efforts with the King National Historic Site
- Fundraise and oversee the development of grant proposals to support projects and programming in the area
- Facilitate consensus building and dispute resolution

### **Development Implementation / Recruitment:**

- Implement an Urban Main Street Program
- Serve as a catalyst for the recruitment of development partners / new projects as needed to round out the development strategy
- Develop tenant recruitment strategy, i.e. database, promotion and marketing services for a balanced tenant mix

Potential funding for the new organization could come from contributions from area organizations, businesses and institutions, from community development funds made possible by the Eastside Tax Allocation District, from the City, from contributions, either in-kind or direct, from Central Atlanta Progress and other community-based grant programs.

### **5.2.2 Other Implementation Partners**

Key additional partners for the Sweet Auburn Redevelopment Agency could include the City of Atlanta, the Atlanta Development Authority (ADA), Central Atlanta Progress (CAP), the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA), the Sweet Auburn Business Improvement Association (SABIA), Georgia State University (GSU) and the numerous faith-based institutions in the area, including Big Bethel AME, Wheat Street Baptist and Ebenezer Baptist. The City and ADA should continue to play a role in ongoing comprehensive planning for the area, securing funding and applying city financial programs towards the area. ADA may be a development partner for major public-private developments, such as the Cultural Center. The other partners will primarily be involved in pushing forward specific catalytic development projects and ensuring the participation of the full Sweet Auburn community.